



YoungStar

Frequently Asked Questions: Application and Participation

March 3, 2017

Note: Almost all questions have been revised since June 10, 2013; questions that have been substantially revised or added since the last update are highlighted.

YoungStar is a 5 Star quality rating and improvement system that supports child care and school-age care providers in the areas of education, learning environment & curriculum, business & professional practices and the health & well-being of children. Through this rating system the state addresses several key issues in Wisconsin's child care system. YoungStar:

- Focuses on improving outcomes for children by improving the overall quality of care
- Creates multiple pathways to professional development opportunities and better quality for child care and school-age programs
- Creates a clear, understandable tool for parents to choose quality child care
- Creates incentives and provides support for programs to improve services, particularly for low-income children
- Improves accountability for the Wisconsin Shares system

Questions: Application and Participation

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Answers: Application and Participation

APP&PCN-1. Is participation in YoungStar required of all child care and school-age providers?

Participation in YoungStar is voluntary for programs that do *not* accept Wisconsin Shares payments from families. However, child care, school-age, and licensed day camp programs that accept Wisconsin Shares payments from families *are* required to participate.

APP&PCN-2. Is there a cost to the program for participating in YoungStar?

There is no cost for child care, school-age, and day camp programs to participate in YoungStar. In fact, YoungStar helps programs by providing training, technical assistance, and small, targeted micro-grants to help them get the things they need to improve and help kids learn even more effectively.

However, quality improvement does cost money, such as when a program chooses to invest in higher education for its staff or purchase additional learning materials for children. Providers can contact Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA) to request an application for T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Wisconsin Scholarship Program:

<http://wisconsinearlychildhood.org/programs/teach/>

(Or contact a WECA Professional Development Counselor at 1.800.783.9322, selecting Option 3 when prompted.)

Programs may make the decision to target additional resources to increase and maintain the quality of their programming.

APP&PCN-3. What is the responsibility of the program/provider/organization regarding the accuracy of The Registry Program Profile?

The Registry Program Profile (also known as an Organizational Profile) is a collection of information entered by child care and school-age programs about the staffing, benefits, and policies of the program. The Program Profile lets programs set up classrooms/groups and assign Lead Teachers/Group Leaders to these classrooms/groups. It also allows programs to assign a Director/Site Supervisor or a Family Child Care Provider to the program.

A program that wants to earn a star rating higher than a 2 Star *must* participate in The Registry and create and maintain an accurate Program Profile. Each employee will need to have a Registry Career Level Certificate (one that has been processed in 2009 or later) in order to be assigned to a position and have her or his qualifications recognized in YoungStar.

To update YoungStar information within the Program Profile, programs need to complete the “Classrooms” tab after signing in to the Program Profile sign-in area on The Registry’s website (www.the-registry.org). If a program is participating in YoungStar, the information on the “Classrooms” tab is used to determine points awarded in YoungStar for education and training. The education level(s) of the program’s Lead Teacher(s)/Group Leader(s), Primary Family Provider, and/or Director/Site Supervisor are used to determine the points and star levels earned in YoungStar. The maximum size of each classroom/group (the “capacity”) is entered here as well to make sure Staff-to-Child Ratios and Maximum Group Sizes for the classrooms/groups in the Program Profile do not exceed regulatory rules.

In the Program Profile’s “Classrooms” tab, the program:

- Identifies each classroom/group
- Assigns *one* Lead Teacher/Group Leader/Primary Family Provider to *each* classroom/group and can also assign co-teachers/assistant teachers/support staff

- Lists the number of children in each age range served in each classroom/group
- States the number of adults in each classroom/group
- Specifies the capacity/maximum group size of each classroom/group

If the program is participating in YoungStar, the information on Career Levels of staff members, classrooms/groups, and the program is transferred electronically from The Registry to DCF. This electronic transfer of information to DCF happens *daily*, and programs are rated based upon this information *monthly*. If a change is made in a Program Profile, this can affect the program’s star rating, point calculations, and YoungStar Quality Adjustment level.

It is the responsibility of the provider to maintain an accurate Program Profile **at all times** to ensure accurate YoungStar ratings. Wisconsin Shares reimbursement levels are linked to YoungStar ratings, and inaccuracies will be investigated. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) takes fraud very seriously and expects referrals to be made to the Fraud Hotline when inaccuracies regarding a Program Profile are discovered:

1-877-302-FRAUD (3728) or dcfmbchildcarefraud@wisconsin.gov

For more information on The Registry Program Profile or for help in creating or updating the Program Profile, see:

- *Maintaining Your Registry Program Profile:*

<http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/keep-program-profile-updated.pdf>

- The Registry has streamlined processes and developed a wealth of resource materials to support programs and staff in completing their applications for Career Levels, establishing Registry Program Profiles, and linking classrooms/groups to Lead Teachers/Group Leaders. Tip sheets, PowerPoints, and video resources have become available to walk individuals through applying for Career Levels and updating Program Profiles—these support materials are available at:

<http://www.the-registry.org/ProgramProfile/Overview.aspx>

- YoungStar Technical Consultants have also assisted many programs through these processes, and Bridget Benson at the Child Care Information Center (CCIC) has been a wonderful support to the child care and school-age workforce as they complete The Registry Career Level application process. Bridget also provides technical consultation on creating or updating Program Profiles and linking classrooms/groups to Lead Teachers/Group Leaders. Contact the CCIC at:

Phone: 800.362.7353 or 608.224.5388

Fax: 608 224-6178 (fax)

Email: ccic@dcf.wi.gov or youngstar@wisconsin.gov

Website: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/ccic>

APP&PCN-4. What is the definition of a Lead Teacher/Group Leader and a Director/Site Supervisor in YoungStar?

The titles and responsibilities of staff depend on the type of program, as shown in this table:

Type of Program	Title	Responsibilities
Group	Lead Teacher	A Lead Teacher plans, implements, and supervises the daily activities for a designated group of children.

School-Age	Group Leader	A Group Leader supervises and guides a group of children in the program under the direction of a Site Supervisor and assists in daily planning and implementing of activities, communication with families, and relations with the community.
Day Camp	Counselor	A Counselor supervises and guides a group of children in the program under the direction of a Camp Director and assists in daily planning and implementing of activities, communication with families, and relations with the community.
Group	Director	This person is responsible for the recruitment, hiring, and guidance of teaching staff and – when necessary – for firing or dismissal of staff. Research shows that programs with well-qualified Directors/Site Supervisors/Camp Directors demonstrate higher quality. This person might also be known as a Coordinator or an Administrator.
School-Age	Site Supervisor	
Day Camp	Camp Director	

APP&PCN-5. Who can be listed as a YoungStar Lead Teacher/Group Leader and a Director/Site Supervisor/Family Provider in The Registry Program Profile?

Lead Teachers/Group Leaders

To determine the Lead Teachers/Group Leaders in The Registry Program Profile, follow these rules and examples:

A. The person who is teaching for the greatest number of hours **between the hours of 6 am and 6 pm** in a given classroom/group must be listed as the Lead Teacher or Group Leader on the Registry Program Profile. For example, if the program is open 7 am to 6 pm, and Barbie works 25 hours per week and Ken works 35 hours per week in a given classroom, Ken must be listed as the Lead Teacher for the classroom.

B. If two or more people work an equal number of hours between the hours of 6 am and 6 pm, either person can be listed as the Lead Teacher or Group Leader on the Registry Program Profile. For example, if Jenny and Kate both work eight hours per day in a school-age program (from 7 am to 3 pm), either could be listed as the Group Leader in the Program Profile for that group.

C. To calculate the number of hours a staff person works (for Program Profile/YoungStar purposes), only hours between 6 am and 6 pm are considered. For example, a program is open 24 hours per day. In the Bumblebee classroom, Callie works from 7 am to 3 pm, and Sarah works from 3 pm to 11 pm. Callie has to be listed as the Lead Teacher in the Program Profile, because even though both she and Sarah work eight hours per day, only three of Sarah's hours are before 6 pm. Therefore, Callie has more hours between 6 am and 6 pm.

Verification of Staffing: Before approving a rating, the Technical Consultant will visit each classroom or group at least once and must see the person who is listed as the Lead Teacher or Group Leader in the Program Profile teaching in that classroom or group. If a Technical Consultant does not see each Lead Teacher/Group Leader in the classroom/group in which s/he is listed in the Registry Program Profile, a Technical Rating will not be completed, and the program will be ineligible for a Formal Rating until the information can be verified. Further proof may be required in the form of time sheets or pay stubs.

Additional Teaching Staff: If a program has more than one individual listed in their Program Profile for a classroom, the training (but not the education) of either individual will be counted when awarding YoungStar points for the following indicators: Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Training/School Age Curricular Framework (B.2.1), Social Emotional/WI Pyramid Model/Inclusion Training/Guiding Children's Behaviors in School-Age Program (D.1.3), and Strengthening Families/Darkness to Light Training (D.1.4).

To be qualified to be listed in the Program Profile, the individual needs to be in the assigned classroom for at least 50% of the time that the classroom is open (up to 40 hours per week). The individual could be listed as any of the following in the Program Profile: Other Teacher, Teacher, Assistant Teacher or Assistant School-Age Teacher. The educational level of these individuals that are listed as something other than the Lead Teacher will not be counted for component A of YoungStar. The method of awarding points for component A will remain the same.

For example, if the Other Teacher in a classroom has taken the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) but the Lead Teacher has not, the program would be given credit for that classroom having met the requirement for WMELS training.

Directors/Site Supervisors

According to *typical* YoungStar staffing requirements, the person who is designated as the Director/Site Supervisor shall be on-site for at least 25% of the total number of hours s/he works for the program and shall have the following responsibilities:

1. Supervision of the planning and implementation of the programming for children
2. Supervision of staff
3. Staff meetings and orientation
4. Continuing education for staff

It is up to the program to determine who is charged with completing these responsibilities and to identify that person as Director/Site Supervisor in its Registry Program Profile. If a program does not have a Director/Site Supervisor position dedicated solely to the performance of these four responsibilities, the program *may ask for a variation* from the typical YoungStar staffing requirements, as described in the answer to “*EDU-11. Can one person serve as both Director (or Site Supervisor or Camp Director) and Lead Teacher (or Group Leader or Counselor)?*”

Note on Verification: YoungStar staff (Technical Consultants and Formal Raters) are *not* responsible for verifying that the person listed as the Director/Site Supervisor is on-site for a set number of hours per week/month/year.

Family Child Care Providers

In most cases, the role of Lead Teacher and Administrator is filled by the same person in Family Child Care. If that is the case, then that person should be listed in both roles (Licensee/Owner and Primary Family Provider) in the Program Profile.

If these two roles are filled by two different people, each person should be listed only in her or his role. The person who is with the children the majority of the time the program is open is to be listed as the Primary Family Provider. YoungStar will consider the educational qualification of only the Primary Family Provider.

If in the case of a family child care program that has a person, other than the Licensee or Owner, teaching for the greatest number of hours between the hours of 6 AM and 6 PM, that person should be listed as the Primary Family Provider on the Registry Program Profile. For example, if the program is open 6 AM to 6 PM and Judy works from 6 AM – 8 AM and then again from 3:30 PM – 6 PM, a total of 25 hours per week and Beth works 32.5 hours per week (8:00 AM – 3:30 PM) with the group of children, Beth should be listed as the Primary Family Provider for the program.

APP&PCN-6. What happens to The Registry Program Profile when a staff member leaves?

The Program Profile should be updated any time a staffing change occurs. Updating the Profile is the responsibility of the Director/Site Supervisor/Family Provider. Also, be aware that individual staff

members can remove themselves from the Program Profile without notice, and these changes can trigger a change in star rating.

The *Maintaining Your Registry Program Profile* document

(<http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/keep-program-profile-updated.pdf>) explains that DCF allows one 90-day “grace period” *per calendar year* for providers whose ratings drop due to staff turnover. During this time, it is expected that the provider will actively be pursuing new staff at the same or higher educational level to replace the departed staff member.

If *during the 90-day grace period* a staff member of *equal or higher* educational level is hired *and* The Registry application, *full* payment, and all the necessary verification materials have been **received** at The Registry, the pending lesser rating will *not* be activated. Rather, the program can remain in the grace period until The Registry completes processing of the application, issues the new staff member’s Career Level, and updates the Program Profile information, at which point the previous or higher rating will be approved.

However, if *after the 90-day grace period* the position has not been filled, or has been filled by a staff member with an education level that does not meet the educational requirements of the higher rating, the lower rating will be activated by the local YoungStar office.

Note: Keep in mind there is the possibility of The Registry issuing a Career Level that is not in line with the expectations of the program — a Career Level that does not support the higher star rating. If this happens due to program staff error, the *lower* rating will be activated (*after* up to eight weeks of processing time at The Registry **and** whatever recruiting and hiring time was used from the grace period), which can come as an unpleasant surprise to a program expecting to maintain its higher star rating.

Example: An application arrives at The Registry with *unofficial* transcripts for a new staff member, instead of the required official transcripts (which can happen in situations where the college won’t release official transcripts until all tuition is paid). The application materials containing the unofficial transcripts *will be* processed, but because the transcripts are *unofficial*, the credits will *not* be “verified.” Therefore, in this example, the new staff member ends up with a Career Level Two, instead of the Career Level Ten that s/he was expecting.

The program was relying on this individual’s credentials to maintain its rating, but because The Registry’s instructions were not followed, the program ends up with the educational minimums to meet a 3 Star rating, rather than the 4 Star rating it had before the staffing change. The program’s rating will change to a 3 Star rating and the YoungStar Quality Adjustment amount will change accordingly.

APP&PCN-7. When a privately funded preschool is part of a licensed group program, how is the site rated?

There is no difference between a child care center and a preschool or nursery school as defined by child care licensing. Many “preschool” programs operate for only 2 ½ to 3 ½ hours per session, and therefore some licensing rules would not apply (such as those related to serving meals, providing naps, and programming for the beginning and end of the day if only older children are present). **Check with your licensor to ask about these specific licensing rules as they relate to your program.**

When one license covers *both* a privately funded preschool and a licensed group program, the preschool program is considered part of the whole licensed program for YoungStar, and the program is given one rating. The only exception to this rule is if the preschool is a Department of Public Instruction- (DPI-) or public school board-funded 3K, 4K, or 5K program; in this case, the DPI- or public school board-funded portion of the program is not rated by YoungStar.

Example 1: A child care program offers “preschool” in a classroom for a portion of the day for three- and four-year-olds, and the parents pay for the preschool. In this case, the preschool

classroom is considered part of the whole licensed program for YoungStar participation, and therefore one rating encompasses the whole program.

Example 2: DPI- or public school board-funded 3K, 4K, or 5K programs that operate stand-alone programs with no wrap-around child care are *not* able to participate in YoungStar. This is because DCF has no authority to regulate these programs, and no Wisconsin Shares funding is being used to pay for the care.

Example 3: When a licensed preschool and a licensed group child care operate with *two* different licenses in the same building, the licensed preschool program is considered separate from the licensed child care program for YoungStar, and each program is given a separate rating.

APP&PCN-8. How does YoungStar renewal/reapplication work?

Providers who are already participating in YoungStar need to reapply every other year by the first day of their anniversary month. This is the anniversary of the month you were given your first rating in YoungStar. So, if you were received your first YoungStar rating on October 15, 2011, your anniversary month is October. The ability to receive Wisconsin Shares payments from families is tied to the YoungStar rating, so it is crucial that providers submit the YoungStar Contract Renewal **every other year by the first day of their anniversary month** to avoid interruption in Wisconsin Shares payments from families.

The program is encouraged to turn in the Contract Renewal as soon as it is received, because parents receiving Wisconsin Shares will be notified if the program has not submitted the renewal **30 days prior** to its anniversary month. This is to give parents a chance to find other care arrangements if the program decides to discontinue participation in YoungStar.

Local YoungStar offices can assist you in completing your renewal application, providing you with a duplicate application, or providing you with information about your anniversary date.

More information and a Reapplication Tip Sheet can be found at:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/providers/renewal>

APP&PCN-9. Where and when will I get a YoungStar Contract Renewal?

Every other year, approximately 4 months before the first day of your anniversary month, you will automatically be mailed a YoungStar Contract Renewal. Some of the information on the form is filled in by DCF—even so, it is very important that you check this information for accuracy. After you complete and sign the form, it must be submitted to the local YoungStar office listed on the YoungStar Contract Renewal.

APP&PCN-10. What if I lose my YoungStar Contract Renewal or never receive one?

Every other year, a YoungStar Contract Renewal will be mailed to you approximately 4 months before your anniversary month, so allow a week to account for postal delays. If after that time you have still not received a YoungStar Contract Renewal, you are encouraged to contact your local YoungStar office (<http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/program/localoffice>) for the form.

YoungStar Contract Renewals are not available online.

APP&PCN-11. If I turn in a YoungStar Contract Renewal and am rated before the first day of my anniversary month, when does my rating show up on the public search site?

An update in a program's rating can be activated as early as the first day of your anniversary month (but never before), so in the scenario above, the new renewal rating will appear ***on the first day of*** your anniversary month.

APP&PCN-12. Do programs that participate in YoungStar have to complete fingerprint-based background checks?

Wisconsin Act 20, which was signed into law in 2013, required all regulated child care and day camp providers eligible to accept Wisconsin Shares reimbursements from families to complete a one-time fingerprint-based caregiver background check by December 31, 2015. As all programs that participate in YoungStar are eligible to receive Wisconsin Shares reimbursements from families, the background check law applies to all YoungStar participating programs.

All licensees, adults that reside at the child care address, volunteers that count in staff-child ratios, and all employees (18 years and older) required to have a caregiver background check were required to complete the one time fingerprint-based check by that date. This requirement was communicated through various memos and reminders, and was included in DCF Child Care Provider Newsletters between 2013 and 2015. The Department has a contract with Fieldprint to collect digital fingerprints to meet this requirement.

During regulatory monitoring checks in 2016 and beyond, any program that is not in compliance with required fingerprint-based caregiver background checks will receive written notification that they have not complied with this law. The program will be allowed a reasonable amount of time to comply at that point. **If, after that time, they are still not compliant, all current Wisconsin Shares Child Care authorizations will be ended and the program will be moved to a non-participation status in YoungStar.**

Programs, whose participation in YoungStar is withdrawn, will have an opportunity to be reinstated in YoungStar at their former star rating level if they comply with all fingerprint-based background check requirements within 30 days of the date they were withdrawn from YoungStar participation. Programs that comply with the fingerprint-based background check requirements after 30 days of being withdrawn from YoungStar participation will need to reapply to YoungStar as a new program that has never received an initial rating.

Any questions regarding compliance with the one-time fingerprint-based caregiver background check should be directed towards:

- Licensed providers should contact the Caregiver Background Unit at 608-422-7400 or DCFplicBECRCBU@wisconsin.gov
- Certified providers should contact their certification agency. Details at: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/ccregulation/cccertification/certifiers.pdf>

Information on scheduling an appointment with Fieldprint can be found at <http://fieldprintwisconsin.com>. Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy questions should be directed to local county or tribal agencies.